



Sylvie Murray

From the Editor

The Strange Course and Pace of Organizational Decision-Making ... or Why You Should Be Paying Attention ...

We live and work in large Organizations, tied to other Organizations, respectively affiliated with larger Organizations which are subject to the will and constraints of yet bigger Organizations, all of which staffed by "leaders"

we have elected or selected in one way or another, all moving along a strange path of regularly-scheduled monthly meetings, interspersed with other regularly-scheduled or ad hoc subcommittee meetings or Executive tables of different shapes and forms where issues are discussed, motions are made, approved, rejected, tabled or referred, and these processes go on for months, sometimes years, until one day we find ourselves informed that a decision has been made, a new system agreed upon, and our life and work environment is mildly improved or worsened as a result.

Whoever, over the course of the last 150 years, decided that this is how democracy in our modern societies was to work was out to lunch, but the problem is that nobody can take the blame or point exactly to a different mode of operation. We find ourselves like the Dust Bowl farmer in John Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath*, facing a Monster Tractor at our door ready to raze our modest home, and not quite knowing whom we should shoot. Charlie Chaplin's *Modern Times* also captured this feeling well when the Tramp is swallowed by the moving assembly line, spat out, and goes about town crazily riveting everything in sight.

Commentaries about the impersonal and absurd nature of modern society are not new, and I won't take more of your precious time rambling about our common fate, but through all this I do think that it's crucially important to stay alert and, somehow, to keep track of where issues are at and what's coming our way. The job of proper communication and consultation is a tricky business, and so is the resolution of complex, tangled disagreements and disputes. Not to mention a new system of rank and tenure to put in place. Your FSA Executive is working on a large number of such tangles and challenges in a professional and responsible way, through our own internal system of committees and monthly and ad hoc meetings... We are also continuing our work of improving our systems of communication and will have a new website, with improved interactive capability, to show soon.

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UPCOMING Events!

College Pension Plan Seminar for Faculty

February 16, 2012
9 am to 12 pm

Contact Employee Services
for more information.

Retirement Workshops

New date
will be announced soon!

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Virginia Cooke

From the President

I confess that in writing this, I feel like a student with a deadline for a paper—and no clear thesis statement! Between Christmas break and the unscheduled “limbo week” in January, it's been fairly quiet in the FSA office. (I call it limbo week because we had to be “ready for duty” or to drive in to UFV—only to turn around and head home through the snow and wind, but once home, could never really finish anything.) Contrast this relative calm with Algonquin College in Ontario which, according to *Academica Today*, currently has over 450 unresolved grievances! I'll take the disruption by the weather over this any time. (Just to put this in perspective, lest you think we are either boring or negligent, most large Ontario colleges have only a handful of grievances.)

The FSA executive are quietly beaver away on issues which concern our members.

- 1) The retirement workshops scheduled for January 19 of limbo week were extremely well subscribed (that's the good news), but had to be cancelled when UFV was closed (that's the bad news). We are working to re-schedule as soon as possible.
- 2) Our new area stewards received some training on January 12, and feel ready to hear you out if you have concerns you wish to bring forward.
- 3) Bargaining survey results are tabulated. I refer you to Hilary's report in this newsletter. The contract committee will work on putting together a package which reflects your wishes. I have been paying careful heed not only to the numbers in this survey, but to the full array of comments you went to the trouble to include. They were impressive and thoughtful, and will be very useful to the Executive in its work.
- 4) We are establishing some long-overdue policies which, for the most part, would be tedious to include in this report—Cell Phone and Credit Card use by the FSA executive, for example. We are also, under the leadership of

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In the meantime, you'll find lots of information and views in the pages that follow. Our doors, telephones and emails are opened for your feedback, questions and opinions. The Bargaining Survey results are out and many tangled issues and strategies will be decided upon in the next few months. The FSA Executive will not be working on its own as it tries to improve our contract. We're in it with FPSE and affiliated unions; the UFV management is in it with other employers in the system; and we're all under the enlightened direction of our provincially elected officials. That's democracy for you!

Don't neglect to read our “*Best of Words & Vision*” column where late Kevin Busswood is back with a 1984 piece on why it's a good idea to join a provincial organization. When we have time, it would be interesting to talk again about how best to manage our organizational ties.

In this issue, we also have a guest report by faculty member Michelle La Flamme on indigenizing not only our institution but our union culture, and some information on opportunities for union-supported Human Rights work. The month of March will be upon us soon. Mark your calendar for International Women's Day events on March 8.

...President's report continued from page 2

Sylvie Murray, working on policies around communications both with our members and with the “outside world.” In addition, we are reviewing the FSA Constitution to make some changes to bring forward to the AGM this spring.

5) Our own FSA staff have never been formally evaluated! I have drafted a template and survey, and once this has CUPE's approval, I hope to complete the evaluations by the end of February so that we can be more responsible employers. Because elected FSA officers regularly change, it is extremely important that the permanent staff have evaluations on file.

Speaking of staff, just in case you hadn't noticed, Harmandeep Dhaliwal, who handles all the financial records of the FSA, is expecting a baby in March. I tried to get the baby to hold off until after the AGM, but was unsuccessful. I think I cannot include this scheduling lapse in the evaluations, as the baby is not formally an employee, even though he/she comes to work every week.

6) The FSA committee on Rank and Tenure hasn't formally met since we held what I thought were very productive faculty forums in November. Now that we have bargaining survey results, the committee will meet once again to see whether there is further work we might do alongside the bargaining process. I broach this topic mindful that staff members of the FSA sometimes feel their eyes glaze over when they must once again listen to faculty on this subject.

For those of you who are eager to further the progress in defining titles and a system which reflects your professional needs as well as the nature of our university and of our diverse faculty and programs, let me encourage you either to begin or to continue the discussions in your departments and faculty councils regarding the criteria for demonstration of successful teaching, service and scholarship in your disciplines and areas. If you will recall from both our report and from the forums, there are boundaries to what the FSA can or should be involved in with respect to these issues. It is the work of faculty within departments, faculties, and the senate to establish the foundations on which promotion and tenure would be established. The work of the FSA is to make certain that equity and fairness are respected, and that clear processes are set up for any decision-making bodies, and further that no expectations that exceed our work as described in the collective agreement can suddenly appear out of the blue. Bargaining is not an instant process, but neither is the work of establishing and agreeing on criteria, and you probably will not want to wait until the results of contact negotiations before you even begin the other work.

7) The additional comment I'd like to make may fall into the category of the obvious, but I hope it still bears stating. A great many of our colleagues are under intense personal pressure. I suppose this is always the case, but in this position, I often become more aware of cases of difficulty and stress. Just count the number of your co-workers who you know are attending to ailing or dying parents, and multiply that to account for all those you don't know about. Add to that the illnesses of spouses or children, the pain of divorces, the inevitable stress of raising teen-agers. Then there are the physical or mental illnesses that strike not just our families, but ourselves. We are no longer a small, cozy “family” of (young) employees that worked at Fraser Valley College twenty-five years ago, but a large, demographically diverse, group of people with complex lives.

I've had some recent experience of my own in discovering a relatively minor physical problem (low blood pressure) that was exacerbated by too many commitments and pressures, and the manifestation was pretty scary (and embarrassing). But these were pressures I had voluntarily brought on myself, so I've learned a few lessons lately about my own limitations. However, many of your colleagues have had little choice in their situations. You all know how life occasionally just dumps a load of dirt in your direction.

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Hilary Turner

From the **Chief Negotiator**

Report on the 2012 Bargaining Survey

One of the key steps towards the next round of bargaining has been taken—asking members what they want. Many thanks to those who responded, and especially to those who commented so extensively. Thanks also to Tanja Rourke who collected and tabulated the results with her usual cheerful efficiency.

We kept the survey simple this time, partly in recognition that we had perhaps been overly ambitious in the 2010 round of negotiations, and partly in anticipation of the miserly mood that is almost certain to prevail among employers as collective agreements across our sector are reopened in April and May this year. It seems strategically naïve to turn up at the table with a raft of small demands that are only likely to bog things down when the overriding issue—some might say the *only* issue—is money.

We received 409 completed surveys, these fairly evenly divided between faculty and staff (53% faculty to 47% staff). The total return rate represents about 40% of all members. In both the faculty and staff categories, a salary increase was the highest ranked priority, selected by 28% of faculty and 39% of staff. Salary was ranked either second or third by 30% of faculty and 5% of staff.

Numerically lesser, but still significant choices for “top priority” were (for staff) a phased retirement plan (12%) and the extension of medical and dental benefits after retirement (10%); and (for faculty), a phased retirement plan (12%) and a system of rank and tenure (19%) [see below]. The emphasis on phased and post-retirement considerations came through loud and clear, with many among both faculty (15%) and staff (27%) selecting it as either their second or third priority. This is the case, even though only 5% in each category are planning to retire in the next two years. For faculty, a more flexible sabbatical plan also emerged as important. Though only 3% ranked it as their highest priority, 21% ranked it second or third.

The Question of Rank

Questions on rank, tenure, and promotion, sent only to faculty, deserve special attention here. Although only 19% selected the implementation of rank, tenure, and promotion as their highest immediate priority, 11% placed it second, and 4% placed it third. Recent discussions on the ways in which rank, tenure, and promotion are related (and how these might be implemented) have been collegial and forward-looking—and the responses to all the related survey questions reflect some movement toward solidarity on the issues. On the other hand, the figures on the next page still indicate that not all faculty members are of the same mind, and that a significant number remain undecided on key aspects of the subject.

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One important function of the FSA is to be alert to these situations and to safeguard against arbitrary or inhumane treatment of people undergoing immense difficulty. We can work with Employee Services and with Management to see that people are offered support in times of crisis. But all of us share the responsibility to show a measure of compassion. The next time you feel annoyed with a fellow employee who doesn't seem to be functioning well, pause until you find out whether there are pressures you don't know about, cut that person a little slack—perhaps respond with an encouraging word. You may never know how much that random act of kindness helped; however, the next time it's your turn to be overwhelmed by life, a culture of compassion may make all the difference.

...Chief Negotiator's report continued from page 4

Questions (compressed, to save space)	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Rank, tenure, promotion should be bargained in this round.	35%	26%	22%	9%	8%
Rank and promotion connected to tenure.	33%	28%	28%	7%	4%
Rank, tenure, promotion connected to academic freedom	52%	35%	12%	1%	0%
Academic support faculty included in rank, tenure, promotion	27%	20%	23%	15%	15%
Grandparent all post-probationary faculty equally	43%	33%	13%	7%	4%
Grandparent all post-probationary faculty at rank of Associate	37%	27%	21%	9%	6%
No associated workload increase	60%	31%	6%	3%	1%
Future workload adjustments should be transparent and public	61%	33%	6%	0%	0%
Rank should not be tied to salary	32%	21%	25%	14%	8%
Future salary adjustments in the context of rank to be collectively bargained	51%	35%	12%	1%	1%
Promotion criteria should recognize diversity	62%	32%	2%	4%	1%
Promotion should include an appeal process	60%	35%	3%	1%	0%
Conditions for rank, tenure, promotion should be laid out in the Collective Agreement	63%	29%	6%	1%	0%

Staff Issues

Staff seem primarily concerned with monetary issues, in various guises. In addition to their top priorities listed above, they would like to see the enrollment of dependents at UFV supported with both early registration and earlier notification of their right to a tuition waiver. They would like to see an increase in their own tuition assistance (with 52% strongly agreeing that the current level should be increased to match that of faculty).

Surprisingly, support for release time to participate in more university committees than is currently allowed was lukewarm: only 11% strongly agreed with the idea, and only 30% agreed. Staff do not seem enthusiastic about building their Educational Leave Fund with salary contributions: 12% strongly agreed that this should be done, 23% agreed, 36% were undecided, and the remainder (28%) didn't like the idea at all. They did, however, support the idea of broadening the criteria for access to this fund, with a respectable majority (59%) agreeing, or strongly agreeing, that these should be based on more than mere seniority.

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Additions and Comments

Items added to the survey and comments appended were also revealing, and many were supportive and helpful. We received 57 suggestions and comments from staff members, and 83 from faculty members. Although all comments and suggestions have been noted and considered, I have room for only a few examples:

- Dental check-ups should be every six months, not nine.
- Employees who engage in snow removal should be specially compensated.
- Professional staff salaries here lag behind those at other post-secondary institutions.
- If a salary increase is out of the question, we should be getting a cost-of-living increase.
- We used to be able to combine coffee breaks with lunch hours. Now we are not allowed to.
- Temporary employees who pay dues should have access to benefits.
- Staff should be able to evaluate their Directors.
- Specialist medical appointments for dependents should be covered under "special leave."
- Auxiliary staff should be entitled to mileage allowance between campuses.
- Only when the FSA and UFV make greater strides to treat Sessionals more equitably will departmental cultures begin to change.
- If the PhD is to be a requirement for new hires, more assistance is needed for current faculty to upgrade.
- I will *not* vote to approve rank and tenure until I know what constitutes rank and tenure.
- Faculty overloads should be paid at a higher rate.
- Teaching loads should be reduced from 7 to 6.
- If all post-probationary faculty are to be given rank, it should be that of Assistant Professor.
- Current faculty who are grandfathered should be ranked as Full Professor after 16 years.
- Department Heads are not compensated adequately.
- Fewer restrictions on when Trades Faculty can use their twenty "non-instructional days"
- 7 courses and \$83,000 is crazy. Either the first number has to be smaller or the second bigger. Everything else is minor in comparison.

Job Action

In a previous column, I explored some of the issues that surround a possible strike in 2012. The survey was not intended as a strike vote, overt or covert, but the last couple of questions did attempt to test the waters on some form of job action. It is not customary to release percentages based on informal questions like these—especially so far in advance of bargaining, or to rely on them as the last word on the subject. I will say, however, that members who feel strongly about the issues that they have identified—yet not so strongly that they would consider a strike—need to do one of two things. They need to forget about any monetary gains in this round of bargaining, **or** they need to rethink their position on job action. As we all know, hardly anything comes without a price these days.

Of course it is entirely up to you. The bargaining team will respect your wishes in all things.



Reprinted from the FSA Newsletter May 1982



Glen Baier

From the Faculty Vice-President

In December, the FSA arranged two meetings, one in Chilliwack and one in Abbotsford. These meetings were scheduled to give faculty an opportunity to ask questions and comment on the document that was produced by the FSA Committee on Rank and Tenure. The committee set the meeting agendas and Sylvie Murray provided a brief power-point presentation that summarized the main points of the document under consideration. Discussion then commenced. The meetings were well attended, especially considering that December is a busy time for faculty. The discussion was productive and the committee received helpful feedback.

One reason for holding the meetings in December was that the document produced by the FSA Committee on Rank and Tenure was intended, in part, to facilitate the framing and phrasing of questions on the latest bargaining survey. The meetings were envisioned as a way of introducing the main aspects of the document so that faculty could better understand the choice of questions found on the bargaining survey.

Now that the results of the bargaining survey are available, the next step is to craft possible bargaining proposals concerning the implementation of a system of rank. I will continue to work with the people on the Committee on Rank and Tenure as well as with the Bargaining Committee on this matter.



Martin Kelly

From the Staff Vice-President

Try this experiment:

The next time you go to a meeting, consider how much of it is spent talking about students, or impact on them. While everything we do ultimately affects service to students, my guess is that most meetings are tinkering with details around what needs to be done in the immediate future and, on a longer time frame, how do more with less. It seems there is an inexorable drive towards decision making seen more through the filters of management control and economics and less

through the filter of service to and impact on students. It never was utopia, it will never be utopia. It's about the balance, the relative weight given to these factors. And as surely as we, the service providers, are affected by decisions and how they are made, so are the students.

When it comes to stacking breaks so you can get off half an hour early, or your work site changes, how many holidays you get, or pension benefits, that is all about us and to be fairly fought and bargained for. There are however many issues that come up which directly affect students. You aren't allowed to work evenings even though that is when you are needed. You can't finish your assigned task because there is not enough time, or you are short-handed. The average student does not differentiate between you and me and UFV as an entity. To the average student we, the employees, are just part of the machine. They generally don't correlate between our workload and the service they receive. Consequently they are not particularly interested in or concerned about our struggles.

I think sometimes (constant proclamations of being student-centered aside) we lose sight of the fact that every one of us is actually working for students. UFV pays us, but students are our customers. Decisions that should be made with the best interest of the students in mind seldom are. I understand the financial reality. I know management has the need and right to direct the workforce. What I'm saying is it wouldn't hurt us to bring a little more focus to the impact on service to students where the decision warrants.

Besides being annoying to you personally, the consequences of being told how to dress, being micro-managed, or controlled from a remote location where your supervisor never sees what you do have an impact on service. Think about bringing student needs to the table. What is the rationale behind any given directive in terms of improving the student experience? In the first place, it's the right thing to do if we practice what we preach. In the second, our lot is probably not going to get any easier in the near future and students can and should be our best allies. They are peeved at the provincial government (have you seen the posters?). They need to better understand that we are working in their best interests as well as our own. We are, right?



Jill Harrison

From the Staff Contract Administrator

Thank you to all our members who have taken the time to come out to the FSA coffee chats on each of our campuses. The response has been positive and I am hoping that our coffee chats will continue to be a place to ask questions and gain a better understanding of your union and what it can... and can't do for you. The meetings are arranged over two hours through the lunch hour. We don't expect you to stay for the entire session but use the time to drop in for a few minutes, ask questions or just listen. Keep checking in with our weekly FSA Bulletin to get dates and times.

At our last sessions we spent some time going through the FSA staff bargaining survey that was completed before the Christmas Break. Thank you to all those who participated. The last two questions on the survey asked whether or not salary increases might be something you would consider job action for, and whether or not you would consider job action for any other high priority issue. Although the overall survey results have indicated that many cost items have been ranged as priorities, the number of people who would undertake job action to obtain them suggests that these are not very high priorities. I want to clarify that wages are not the only items impacted by a government zero mandate for bargaining. Improved benefits; increased vacation days; cost of living increases; accrual of sick days; staff replacements for sick leave; additional PD funds; coverage for PD at other institutions; priority registration; improved extended health—these are all cost items that will be denied within the government zero mandate.

I don't find it surprising that the membership is hesitant to think about job action. It is certainly an uncomfortable thought and comes with all kinds of fears and worries about rent, mortgages, car payments, and even food on the table. But the question remains—how does the union proceed in order to be successful in our bargaining without the possibility of job action? If the membership wants the union to bargain cost items, then the membership must also be open to discussing job action. A successful strike vote is the best source of strength that any bargaining team can have.

It is important for the entire membership to be engaged in this bargaining process—ask questions. No one should be comfortable making an uninformed decision. Make sure that you have the facts and can balance your request for cost items with the possibility of job action. Is a cost of living allowance the tipping point? And if so, what does job action look like? How long will the job action last? Is there strike pay available? What other provincial unions are talking job action? Is the job action synchronized?

Many questions to think about and answers to look for—do your part and recognize that we all own the process. To be clear, the bargaining survey was not a strike vote. The survey was designed to test the water, see what membership was looking for and see how serious the membership was with regard to job action. My article was written to clarify a disconnect that I saw between high priority issues that membership would like to be bargained and the realization that the majority of these issues are all cost items that may require job action... stay tuned.

SELLING SHORT

'We adjust everything for inflation except salaries.'



Reprinted from the FSA Newsletter Jan/Feb 1982



Linda Toews

From the Faculty Contract Administrator

Has “money” become a bad word?

I am confused, and I have questions... The Bargaining Survey undertaken by the FSA indicates that for many respondents a salary increase is the highest priority, but the survey doesn't indicate strong support for job action to achieve a salary increase in 2012.

*Money can't buy back all your youth when you're old
A friend when you're lonely, or peace for your soul
The wealthiest person is a pauper at times
Compared to the man with a satisfied mind.*

Jeff Buckley—Satisfied Mind

My mother (God bless her privileged Victorian upbringing) taught me that it was undignified to talk about money. I shouldn't go to friend's houses and wonder, or worse, try to find out what their parents did for work and how much money they made. I should never ask, in a job interview, what the pay was. I should never ask, in polite company, how much something cost. I should work hard and try to live off what I could earn and save and not expect handouts, and that I should try to help others less fortunate when I could.

Does this combination of valuing a “satisfied mind” more than money, and our upbringing and attitudes towards money make us uncomfortable enough that we may just roll over and accept the BC Government's “net zero” in 2012? Does seeing poverty and starvation in so much of the world make us feel guilty when we ask for an increase to keep up with the cost of living in our part of the world? Has “money” become a dirty word in BC in 2012?

Academics, intelligent and altruistic folk, engage in deeply satisfying and rewarding work, educating future generations. The problem is, in the province of BC, in 2012, together with all the other public sector workers who do wonderful, rewarding, sometimes lifesaving work, it's not enough anymore to have a “satisfied mind”.

Can we at least agree that it's not undignified to expect that our wages will keep up with the cost of living? Many have invested years of their time, for many all the years of their youth, in earning advanced degrees to be able to pass on knowledge and a passion for the creation of new knowledge. Can we agree that we are worth being paid appropriately for what we do?

Can we agree that some things are worth taking a stand on, and the BC Liberal Government's “Net Zero” position just might be one of those things? Why should we be made to feel demanding, rude and undignified simply because we are asking for a modest increase to cover the cost of living in or on the periphery of one of the most expensive places to live in the world? Is the lower mainland such an attractive place to live that the eventual pull of better opportunities in other places can be ignored while our standard of living declines year after year?

Let's approach this calmly, firmly and not try to negotiate catch up beyond what we have lost since 2009 to cost of living (1.8 + 3.2), and let's negotiate annual cost of living minimum increases from 2012 on. We don't want to appear greedy and undignified, but we should expect to be compensated fairly for what we do.

End of rant!



Reprinted from the FSA Newsletter Jan/Feb 1982

In my day-to-day work as Faculty Contract Administrator (thankfully not nearly as frustrating as tilting at the government windmills), I am working on a grievance related to the Probationary Faculty IPEC process, observing SAC's for process, learning to understand the process of how a grievance moves to arbitration, attending contract meetings, Labour and Management meetings, still working with the joint committee on the Letter Of Agreement for working conditions for non-teaching faculty (Academic Support Faculty) and liaising with many departments and individuals in the University. This is challenging and rewarding work, and most days I go home with a satisfied mind that I have done my best for that day and for our membership. However, a little bit more money would be nice for everybody and it would satisfy my mind more if we were able to negotiate that in 2012.



Adrienne Chan

From the FPSE Human Rights & International Solidarity Rep

The FPSE Human Rights and International Solidarity Committee met in December 2011. Representatives from all over the province attended. There were a few highlights that are worth mentioning.

Chief Bob Chamberlin of the Kwicksutaineuk Ah-kwa-mish First Nation spoke to the group about the water situation in First Nations/Aboriginal communities. With the recent news of the struggles of the Attawapiskat First Nation in Ontario, Chief Chamberlin spoke of the experiences of his own First Nation on Gilford Island. They have recently installed a new water treatment plant. This has helped remove the "Boil Water Advisory" on their reserve that had been in place for 10 years. In addition, Chief Chamberlin spoke of his band's struggles with being forced under third-party management. His remarks were well received by the committee, and he agreed to speak at future FPSE events should he be invited. FPSE HRIS continues to discuss concerns about the third world conditions that are being experienced by the First Nation community of Attawapiskat in Northern Ontario.

Karen Spring, an SFU graduate student, gave a presentation on the work of Rights Action, a group for which she worked for more than three years in Guatemala and Honduras. The goal of Rights Action is to get money on the ground to various community-based groups. As well, Rights Action works on educating Canadians and Americans about the impact that they have on local communities in those countries. For example, in both Guatemala and Honduras, Canadian mining companies are negatively affecting a number of local communities by their actions (i.e. leeching the land and the water). Rights Action works with local indigenous groups to bring attention to how the actions of Canadian and American companies are affecting their populations. Even activities like tourism, which many Canadians see as a positive for the local population, are problematic: Canadian companies are illegally purchasing land for resorts and gated housing communities. All of the union locals gave a report of their activities. Campuses around the province are engaged in events and are bringing in speakers to discuss everything from Amnesty International to the Cuban Five. Many have also commemorated the Montreal "massacre". The range of activities is quite broad and takes both a local and global view of rights issues. The FPSE HRIS group is concerned about a wide range of issues including the changes in the Canadian Wheat Board proposed by Steven Harper. Harper is affectionately referred to as the "dictator" among some discussion groups.

Here at UFV the FSA's Human Rights and International Solidarity Committee, in conjunction with the Race & Antiracism Network (RAN), has sponsored a talk on "Human Rights and The 'War on Terror'" on Monday, January 30. Our guest speakers were Sunera Thobani, Associate Professor in Women's and Gender Studies and Director of the RAGA Centre at UBC, and Ron Dart, faculty member in the Department of Political Science. The talk was well attended and led to provocative discussions.

FPSE Status of Women Rep

Anastasia Anderson

I do not have much news to share in this edition of *Words & Visions*. However, I am happy to report that the candlelight vigil to mark *Canada's National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence against Women* was well attended. Virginia Cooke, Satwinder Bains, and Wendy Burton gave moving and inspiring speeches. Michele Giordano of the Women's Resource Society of the Fraser Valley was also in attendance and provided the emotionally powerful *Silent Witness Display*, a display of life-sized wooden silhouettes representing women murdered by a husband, common-law partner, or boyfriend. Lisa Morry and I also set up an information table before the vigil and this gave us the opportunity to speak with interested students, faculty, and staff about the importance of the day. It was heartwarming to see so many people wearing white ribbons and white clothing to show their support for taking action on violence against women.

March 8 is *International Women's Day*. I have joined a group of wonderful people from UFV and the local community who are planning an event on the UFV Abbotsford campus to mark *International Women's Day*. Please keep an eye out for announcements about what is sure to be an informative, thought-provoking, and joyful celebration. The FSA Status of Women committee is also hoping to be involved in organizing a visit from Vicki Gabereau who may be speaking at UFV as part of the President's Lecture Series and whose visit will also be part of celebrating *International Women's Day*.

I will be heading off to Vancouver on February 24 for a meeting of the FPSE Status of Women Committee. If you have any issues that you would like me to raise at this meeting or at any of our FSA Executive meetings, please let me know.

Best of words & vision

In this 1984 article the late Kevin Busswood, then FSA President, presented his personal view on the benefits of a provincial union. The College Institute Educators' Association (CIEA) to which he refers in this piece is the predecessor of the Federation of Post-Secondary Educators (FPSE).

The *Words & Vision* archives contain a wealth of information and opinion on topics that are still relevant today. If you feel inspired to share your own personal views on the question, feel free to drop us a line.

SHOULD WE JOIN A PROVINCIAL UNION? : A PERSONAL VIEW

*By: Kevin Busswood, President
1984*

During the next few months we are invited to consider joining with other college unions in the formation of a provincial union. Such a step has special implications for the FSA, given our structure as a joint faculty and staff union, and should be given careful thought before any commitment is made.

A great deal of information will be made available; however, I am writing this column to give a personal view of this matter, a view based on my almost 10 years of association with the college system and its labour relations.

When the colleges were created in the early 1970's they were a response to a variety of community based movements seeking better educational opportunities for a province in which post-secondary educational services were concentrated in the south-west corner of the province. It was felt that the community colleges would be appropriate vehicles for delivering education which would accommodate community and regional needs. While there were many similarities between colleges, each was linked to its own regional base, and, through local boards, reflected many unique characteristics of their client communities.

Labor relations in the college system were also diverse during the early period. At varying times, and with varying concerns, faculty and staff groups formed associations, then unions. Despite the differences between groups, enough of a community of interest was perceived such that the CFF (College Faculties Federation) was created to allow unions to discuss and comment on issues of common interest.

Even during these early and relatively prosperous days there were arguments made that a provincial union of faculty would allow stronger representations to be made vis a vis working conditions and salaries. The union argument was seen, especially by the larger lower mainland colleges, as too radical, and detrimental to a proper professional attitude among faculty. Despite the "containment" of the one big union movement, it was becoming apparent that centralization within the college system demanded greater unity among faculty, and so

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CFF was laid to rest and CIEA [College Institute Educators' Association] was born—not as a provincial union, but as a federation of independent unions with considerable articulation and coordination of mutual concerns.

While faculty were figuring out to what extent they were (or weren't) trade unionists, most staff groups in the province were affiliating with BCGEU, CUPE, or AUCE. Only at Fraser Valley College was something different attempted.

The tendency towards centralization, begun in the 1970's, has not abated. The Sacred provincial government has abandoned the original community based college in favour of a series of branch plant operations which deliver educational services designed and funded by a central authority. While this centralized model is not completely in place, it is implicit in government actions and legislation which have gutted boards of community representation, taken away board autonomy, and imposed formula funding.

Centralization, involving as it does a pre-occupation with costs, has had considerable impact on working conditions. Everyone is being squeezed. Classes get bigger, support staff have more and more tasks to perform, library and equipment budgets plummet, and so on.

Given the events of the past few years, I believe that the time has come to take some steps which acknowledge the pressures that we are under. The consequences of centralization strike at all aspects of college life from working conditions through professional concerns. It is important, if we remain committed to some version of the original community college vision, to keep resisting, struggling to inject some degree of vision and humanity into the machinations of the provincial government as it tramples around in the educational fields. Forming a provincial union is a small but necessary step in a resistance movement.

The major question confronting us at FVC is whether we can take this step without trading away or weakening the particular strengths and benefits that are characteristic of FVC's labour relations. Let us be very clear—our college, despite the provincial attack, has not suffered the daily attacks and humiliations that have occurred at other colleges. The provincial offensive has been filtered through the unique character of our union and management structure, and most of our members are sensitive to the need to maintain the benefits that obtain within our college community. Let us also be clear, however, that our relatively good labour relations have not made us immune to attack. We have suffered considerably in all areas. Our wages and morale have dropped in the face of increasing workloads and declining services.

The major benefits that follow from the creation of a provincial union are three fold: First, we enhance our collective ability to consider and articulate professional and other concerns which are common to all college communities. Second, through a more elaborate staffing of a central office, we increase our ability to deal with a wide variety of grievance and negotiating issues. The costs of such servicing are lowered by avoiding duplication, and the quality of servicing is increased by pooling experience. Third, we greatly increase our ability to defend ourselves through the existence of a central defence fund which, in addition to providing funds to allay strike and lockout costs, sends a message to the provincial government about our "bottom line".

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I believe that these benefits and others can be achieved without loss of those things which set Fraser Valley College somewhat apart from other colleges. I base this conclusion on the fact that we would retain significant autonomy in dealing with our own negotiations and internal labor relations. We would continue to hold our own certification, and we would maintain virtually the same internal structure, with responsibility for the conduct of our own affairs. Help is available if necessary, but under normal conditions we would continue as before, free to forge or maintain whatever labor relations we consider appropriate.

It is a fair question to ask why we should bother to join a provincial union if we intend to conduct our business as before. I must repeat that while we have, in relative terms, hung on to a significant degree of collegiality, we have been battered by restraint. We need, as our provincial colleagues need, increased solidarity, and the ability to aggressively promote the interests of college employees. If the provincial government is going to relate to college employees as a "mass", then it is important that we develop the ability to make a collective response when necessary. The provincial government continues to press for workloads and conditions which are much greater than we believe to be appropriate in a high quality educational system. Our ability to defend ourselves is arguably enhanced when we increase our ability to collectively respond to issues of common concern.

A final point concerns the question of whether staff interests are protected by a move towards provincial union status. As I have already noted, most staff groups at other colleges are affiliated with CUPE or BCGEU, thus making the FSA the only CIEA member with a staff component. To the extent that staff and faculty have benefited from a joint union through the past decade, we will continue to benefit.

The need to improve services will remain our own local problem. Membership in CIEA will not, I believe, cause any deterioration in the servicing of staff interests. In fact, given the experience of CIEA staff, FSA staff members will receive excellent support in matters relating to the administration of the collective agreement. Whether or not other staff groups might come in to CIEA in the long run is not known at this point.

I have not given any consideration to the fact that CIEA's President's Council has recommended against joining CUPE or BCGEU. At the risk of oversimplifying an important issue, I believe that most presidents feel that these unions are too large and too removed from college realities to provide what we need. The responsibility for protecting our interests remains with us and should not be transferred. A provincial union, built around CIEA, will be tailored to our needs and concerns, and can grow and develop in accordance with our perception of our circumstances.

The forgoing article is, I reiterate, a personal statement. There will be adequate opportunity to discuss any matters to which I may have given short shrift. The question of staff interests in particular will require more discussion. Please give careful consideration to the information that will be coming out, and avail yourself of the opportunities to attend the meetings that will occur during the next few months.

I am convinced that while a provincial union is a necessary and evolutionary step, it will not degrade our local autonomy, and the unity of faculty and staff that we have created over the years.

Balancing Aboriginal Culture and Academic Culture

By Dr. Michelle La Flamme

Recently I was invited to attend a three day CAUT Forum for Aboriginal Academic Staff in Vancouver held in November of 2011. The Executive Director and the President of CAUT were in attendance in order to hear about our experiences from universities across the country. They were greeted by a room filled to capacity with Aboriginal faculty and staff. I immediately gravitated toward the UBC table and sat with my former colleagues and friends from my alma mater. Following a warm welcome by CAUT, I joined the UBC cohort to provide an opening Coast Salish ceremony that included preparing witnesses for their task of recording their impressions.

Each day involved meetings featuring a plenary session followed by discussion circles where people spoke to specific themes. Two senior Aboriginal academics from Trent University and U Vic spoke about 'Recognizing and Naturalizing Indigenous Knowledge in the Academy' and provided the framework for the discussions to follow. They addressed three key issues: access for indigenous students; recognition of indigenous faculty and student expertise; and funding support for specific indigenous programs. The discussion circles took up four central concerns that were the basis of the conference: (1) the role of Elders in colleges and universities; (2) managing work-life balance; (3) negotiating racial diversity in the classroom; (4) working conditions for indigenous academics.

Saturday's Forum focus concerned 'Promotion and Tenure', and the plenary sessions allowed for smaller break-out groups to address the fact that indigenous academics often are expected to participate in the 'normal' sorts of activities by which the academy rates and ranks 'standing' pursuant to deciding on tenure and promotion (e.g. research, teaching and training, administration and service) and they often also participate in their local indigenous communities, including consultation with Elders and mentoring Aboriginal students. This double workload was referenced by many in the plenary session with hope for strategies to accommodate these unique demands.

In each break-out session a moderator was present as well as one of the witnesses chosen at the start of the session. In each session I attended it was clear that across the country Aboriginal faculty and staff face special challenges because of our interest in meeting both the academic culture and Aboriginal cultural protocols. One positive strategy to accommodate this double set of priorities involved an active emphasis on bringing increased awareness to our unions regarding the special needs and requirements of what it means to be an indigenous person who happens also to be a full-time professional academic.

Elders added important perspectives to these discussions and referenced the need for the inclusion of traditional knowledge in academic spaces. Other themes that emerged included the following:

- The notion of "walking in two worlds" and trying to strike a balance to meet these sometimes competing demands;
- the importance of engaging in research that is done in collaboration with communities and has a productive and empowering result;
- the difficulty of holding a cultural value of not being arrogant with the need to assert oneself and "toot one's own horn" to achieve promotion and tenure;
- the need to find ways for the academy to value the service to the Aboriginal community and make it translatable in the academy by referring to it as equally important scholarly activity and service.

One of the most compelling best practices that were shared had to do with list-serves for Aboriginal faculty and staff. Such a list-serve could break down the social and cultural isolation faced by Aboriginal faculty and staff who are "the one" working in isolation even within their respective departments. UBC has been using a list-serve for Aboriginal graduate students and it has been very effective in providing students with opportunities to co-present and co-publish and mentor each other. This is particularly needed because many Aboriginal graduate students, like Aboriginal faculty and staff, are the first in their families to enter academic spaces so the need to make the protocols and demands of this career understandable is even more pressing for this demographic. A suggestion was made throughout the conference to create a network similar to SAGE for faculty and staff in universities across the country. Such a list-serve would be a method of sharing resources on grants, conference, teaching and educational initiatives, research and other resources nationwide. It would also provide an opportunity to continue the networking process between and within Aboriginal faculty and staff as a cohesive group because this forum only meets bi-annually.

Faculty also spoke about their desire to be recognized in their respective departments for the skills that they have that are beyond the narrow definitions of First Nations Studies. One faculty member shared her experience of being a recent

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hire who, in addition to her teaching commitment, was expected to develop a MA in FNS without having the expertise in this area. The task was daunting for her especially given that she was a first generation academic working in isolation and yet because she was Aboriginal she was still expected to have the administrative skills, time and traditional knowledge to create an effective FNS program. There was also much talk of the growing demographic of Aboriginal faculty and staff and the need for policies that reflect the unique conditions that they face in the workplace. One key suggestion that came up time and again relates to the important role that unions can play in terms of advocacy. Keynote speakers suggested that the CAUT Bargaining Advisory drafted in January 2010 should and could be made available to groups across the country. Another suggestion was that Aboriginal faculty and staff inform their department heads and deans of the recommendations made by these educators in the areas of the appointment process, proactive recruiting, tenure and promotion, workload and leaves.

The conclusion of the Forum involved documenting the best practices that had been developed in the plenary sessions into one cohesive document so that these suggestions and priorities could be communicated to the CAUT leadership and to others. The important groundwork laid by CAUT and affiliated associations was addressed, along with their continued commitment to creating policy and initiatives aimed at addressing some of the equity issues faced by Aboriginal faculty and staff. Other key policies mentioned included the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The Forum adjourned with a closing ceremony, wherein the witnesses also had a chance to provide their feedback and reflections on the sessions they attended.

The purpose of the Forum was met by holding the space for dedicated and enthusiastic faculty and staff, traditional indigenous knowledge keepers and elders, as well as students to offer suggestions to redress the systematic discrimination faced by indigenous academics, students, staff and Elders in Canadian universities and colleges.

At one point on the last afternoon our small UBC table was actively engaged in the work that is part of indigenizing the academy. I sat with a former student from UBC and discussed how she might balance full-time studies with full-time solo parenting, provided feedback to another MA student from UBC and discussed the thesis requirements with two other doctoral students. In addition to sharing from my own experience of navigating academia, I was also mentored by two Aboriginal faculty members (Jo-ann Archibald and Dr. Richard Atleo) who have tenure. Sharing three days of intensive discussion with a room full of Aboriginal faculty and staff from across the country who are so deeply engaged with these questions and so committed to culture and education gave me renewed inspiration to continue working with allies and Aboriginal faculty and staff to do my part in moving forward the strategic priorities associated with indigenizing the academy. I am grateful to the FSA for the opportunity to attend the conference and I left feeling both enthusiastic and supported with the cliché "We have come a long way" ringing in my head.

Call for Proposals: FPSE International Solidarity Fund 2012

The FPSE's International Solidarity Fund Committee is inviting proposals for projects that build partnerships between our Federation and people in the disadvantaged world.

The deadline for application is
Friday, February 17, 2012 at 4 pm.

For more information, please see
<http://fpse.ca/committees/hrisc/isf>
or contact George Davidson at
gdavison@fpse.ca.

Burns Lake Tragedy: Help Raise Funds for Families

Support the workers and their families affected by the Burns Lake Tragedy by making a donation through the BC Federation of Labour. For more information, please see <http://bcfed.ca/>

Funds raised will be distributed based on need, beginning with providing financial support to the families of workers who lost their lives, as well as those who were injured by the explosion. The fund will also support workers impacted by the loss of the mill and the community of Burns Lake as a whole.

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WHAT'S NEXT ON THE FPSE CALENDAR?

Visit the FPSE website at
<http://www.fpse.ca>

Upcoming Committee Meetings:

February 3 & 4

Bargaining Coordination Committee

February 24

Workplace Health, Safety and Environment
Education Policy
Status of Women
Professional and Scholarly Development
Disability Management & Rehabilitation
Human Rights & International Solidarity

February 25

FPSE Spring Leadership Conference

words & vision

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